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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT

SUBJECT Flight Alert Procedures in the
Polish Air Force

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1. A report containing information on flight alert procedures in the Polish Air Force

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Fighter Alert Procedures in the Polish Air ForceIntroduction

1. The primary responsibility of the Polish Air Force within the Warsaw Pact was the air defense of the Baltic Coast (Pomeranian District). Direct telephone line communication between the air force headquarters of the Warsaw Pact nations was maintained at all times. There was no direct contact between any individual unit of one country and that of another. Soviet air defense units located in Warsaw Pact nations were tied into this communications system but were not directly subordinate to the Air Force headquarters of the country in which they were stationed. 50X1-HUM
the heaviest concentration of air defense units in Poland was distributed in the Pomeranian District. The designation of all Polish fighter units within the air defense system was OK (Obrona Kraju), which was added to the end of the original unit designation. These units were posted at various airfields and each was required to maintain two fighters on alert at all times.

Control Procedures and Data Handling

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2. The radar equipment at Polish early warning sites was capable of making first detection at a distance of approximately 60 kilometers; Soviet radar units in Poland were rumored to have equipment with a range of approximately 140 kilometers. A border crossing incident was recorded in four phases:
 - a. An identification of the aircraft was made by a thorough check of the daily flight plans which had to be filed with an unidentified clearing authority prior to a border crossing. Identification was made by a comparison of time, course, height, and speed to that which was logged.
 - b. If the aircraft was unidentified or determined to be an enemy, an alerting telephone call was made to the appropriate fighter base and to the anti-aircraft sites nearest the border crossing incident or in the path of the subject aircraft. A complete situation map was marked and kept current at the radar control center located at the radar site.
 - c. Upon notification of the incident, the control tower (SD-Stanowisko Dowodzenia) of the alerted fighter base scrambled the two alert aircraft, which circled the airfield awaiting instructions. Another coordinated situation map was maintained at the control tower and was supplemented by information supplied by the radar control center; no map was located in either of the two aircraft. The control tower plotted and analyzed the situation, making the necessary calculations and adjustments, and then directed the fighters toward the target. The control tower directed the course, altitude and speed of the fighters. After the initial transmission the control

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tower broke radio silence only when the situation necessitated a change in the fighters' course, altitude or speed. During this procedure the control tower was kept informed of all new progress by the radar control center.

- d. The pilot of the lead fighter reported visual contact with the target, and all radio communications ceased. At this time, visual combat commenced since there was no airborne radar available to the Polish Air Force. Radar gunsights allegedly having a range of five kilometers were mounted in MIG-17s;

Aircraft Alert Stands or Positions

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3. The two alert aircraft at each fighter air defense unit could be held in one of the three stages of alert:
- a. The alert aircraft were parked on the alert apron but the pilots did not have to be in the immediate vicinity. The pilots kept the control tower informed of their whereabouts in case of an alert.
 - b. The aircraft were parked on the alert apron. The pilots wore their flight gear, and by regulation they could not be more than 50 meters from the aircraft, preferably in the alert shack.
 - c. The aircraft were parked at the end of the runway with engines running and pilots in their cockpits.
4. The scramble order was a rocket fired from the control tower. Scrambled pilots were supposed to be airborne within 90 seconds from the alert apron or 20 seconds from the end of the runway. In practice alerts, scrambling times from the alert apron were rated average if 60 seconds and excellent if 45 seconds.

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Opinion of System

5. Practice alerts were held normally once a week in the summer and once every two weeks in the winter; this was not enough practice since it was highly possible that a pilot might not participate in a single mission within a six months period. Personnel assigned to such a system, especially those at the control tower, should be highly skilled, but this was not true in the Polish Air Force. Many of the so-called aircraft control specialists did not know the fundamentals of their jobs. Lack of coordination existed between the radar control center and the control tower. Consequently, there was a great deal of confusion in the transmittal of information. Strict communications security, which at one time was considered one of the primary faults of the system, was slightly eased and the Polish Air Force used an open mike to transmit data to the alert aircraft. This was considered a security risk which had to be taken.

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